

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7769
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVDOR 1908

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, SHUM, VE, ES
SUBJECT: SITUATION IN EL SALVADOR

REFS: (A) CARACAS 3600, (B) SAN SALVADOR 1871

1. THIS IS IN RESPONSE TO EMBASUA CARACAS REQUEST FOR GUID-
ANCE ON POSSIBLE DISCUSSIONS WITH VENEZUELAN OFFICIALS ABOUT
THE SITUATION IN EL SALVADOR. AS REF B POINTS OUT, THE VENE-
ZUELAN EMBASSY, ALONG WITH THREE OTHERS INVOLVED, WAS EVACUAT-
ED IN AN ORDERLY MANNER ON APRIL 18 AFTER NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN
THE POPULAR REVOLUTIONARY BLOC (BPR) AND THE CHIEFS OF MISSION
OF THE EMBASSIES INVOLVED. PRESIDENT ROMERO REPORTEDLY GAVE AS-
SURANCES TO MONSIGNOR MARCO RENE REVELO, AUXILIARY BISHOP OF
SAN SALVADOR, WHO WAS ACTING AS MEDIATOR, THAT PERSONS OCCUPYING
EMBASSIES WOULD BE ALLOWED TO LEAVE THE EMBASSIES UNMOLESTED
UNDER THE PROTECTION OF THE RED CROSS.

2. WHILE THIS MIGHT FURTHER INDICATE TO PRESIDENT PEREZ THAT GOES
SIMPLY STEPPED ASIDE AND "FOLDED ITS ARMS", THE GOVERNMENT
HERE APPARENTLY FELT CONSTRAINED NOT TO USE FORCE BECAUSE OF
EXTRATERRITORIAL CHARACTER OF DIPLOMATIC PREMISES. AT A MEETING WITH
THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS ON APRIL 14, PRESIDENT ROMERO POINTED OUT
THAT BECAUSE OF THE PRINCIPLE OF EXTRATERRITORIALITY, GOES COULD
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NOT ACT UNLESS IT WAS INVITED TO DO SO. GOES NEVER RECEIVED
A FORMAL REQUEST FROM THE CHIEFS OF MISSION OF THE EMBASSIES
AFFECTED TO TAKE ACTION CONCERNING THE OCCUPANTS, ACCORDING TO
A STATEMENT BY FOREIGN MINISTER ALVARO ERNESTO MARTINEZ IN
A NEWSPAPER INTERVIEW PUBLISHED ON APRIL 19; AND CHIEFS OF MISSION
DID NOT SO REQUEST PROBABLY BECAUSE THEY KNEW FORCE WOULD BE USED.

3. THE WHOLE "EMBASSIES SEIZURES" EPISODE, WHILE UNDOUBTEDLY EMBARRASSING FOR THE GOES, CANNOT ITSELF BE SAID TO HAVE CREATED A SITUATION APPROACHING THE CHAOTIC OR "DANGEROUS". THE GOVERNMENT WAS IN FULL CONTROL OF THE GENERAL SECURITY SITUATION THROUGHOUT THE EPISODE. THE SECURITY FORCES ACTED WITH RESTRAINT WITH REGARD TO EMBASSY SEIZURES, PERHAPS IN LARGE PART DUE TO FACT THAT EYES OF DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY WERE LITERALLY UPON THEM.

4. ALTHOUGH THE BPR HAD TO FALL OFF FROM ITS ORIGINAL DEMANDS (WITHDRAWAL OF SECURITY FORCES FROM RURAL AREAS THAT HAVE RECENTLY BEEN SCENES OF DISTURBANCES, AMNESTY FOR PRISONERS TAKEN IN THOSE DISTURBANCES, THE ANNULMENT OF THE RECENTLY PASSED LAW OF PUBLIC ORDER) AND SETTLE FOR JUST HAVING GOES PERMIT OCCUPANTS OF EMBASSIES RETURN TO HOMES UNMOLESTED, THIS DOES NOT MEAN TACTIC OF PEACEFUL TAKEOVER OF EMBASSIES BY DISAFFECTED GROUPS IS ONE LIKELY TO DISAPPEAR. THE TACTIC HAS BEEN RESORTED TO BEFORE (ON FEBRUARY 3, 1978 A GROUP OF DISAFFECTED WORKERS OCCUPIED THE UNITED NATIONS CENTER OF INFORMATION LOCATED IN SAN SALVADOR) AND WILL PERHAPS BE GAIN. IT IS, AFTER ALL, A TACTIC CALCULATED TO CAUSE MAXIMUM EMBARRASSMENT TO THE GOVERNMENT WHILE AT THE SAME TIME LIMITING ANY POSSIBLE REACTION ON ITS PART BECAUSE OF THE EXTRATERRITORIAL PREMISES INVOLVED AND THE GLARE OF PUBLICITY.

5. MORE IMPORTANTLY, IN WHAT THEY CONSIDER THE ABSENCE OF LEGAL AND OTHER OUTLETS FOR EXPRESSING GRIEVANCES, THE DISAFFECTED CONFIDENTIAL

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AND ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED PEOPLE THAT COMPRISE THE POPULAR REVOLUTIONARY BLOC AND OTHER GROUPS, HAVE INCREASINGLY RESORTED TO THE TACTIC OF PEACEFUL OCCUPATION OF GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS, CHURCH PREMISES, AND NOW EMBASSIES, AS A MEANS OF DRAWING ATTENTION TO THEIR GRIEVANCES. THE MOST SPECTACULAR EXAMPLE OF THIS TACTIC WAS TWO-DAY TAKEOVER OF MINISTRY OF LABOR IN NOVEMBER 1977.

6. THUS, IN ANY CONVERSATIONS EMBASSY CARACAS MIGHT HAVE WITH GOV OFFICIALS IN FUTURE CONCERNING THIS MATTER, IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE TO POINT OUT THAT RECENT SEIZURE OF EMBASSIES WAS LATEST MANIFESTATION OF A TACTIC INCREASINGLY RESORTED TO BY DISAFFECTED AND ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED GROUPS IN EL SALVADOR AS A MEANS OF CALLING ATTENTION TO GRIEVANCES THEY FEEL THEY CANNOT OTHERWISE MAKE KNOWN THROUGH LEGAL INSTITUTIONS OR CHANNELS. WHILE THIS TACTIC HAS NOT CREATED A SITUATION OF CHAOS, IT MIGHT BE POINTED OUT THAT IT HAS EMBARRASSED AND HARRASSED THE GOVERNMENT AND FOR THIS REASON ALONE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY CONTINUE TO BE RESORTED TO, INCLUDING THE POSSIBLE SEIZURE OF EMBASSIES IN THE FUTURE.

7. COMMENT FYI. WE WOULD EMPHASIZE THAT LEFTIST REVOLUTIONARY

GROUPS ARE GROWING IN STRENGTH AND DARING IN EL SALVADOR.
THE CHURCH-STATE STRUGGLE CONTRIBUTES TO A GENERAL POLITICAL
POLARIZATION, AND FURTHER EXACARBATES DEEP-SEATED SOCIOECON-
OMIC PROBLEMS, ESPECIALLY IN THE RURAL AREA. THE GOVERNMENT
IS ATTEMPTING TO FACE THESE PROBLEMS WITH NEW PLANS AND PROGRAMS,
BUT WE CAN IN ANY EVENT ANTICIPATE THE POLITICO-SECURITY SITUATION
TO GET MORE SERIOUS BEFORE IT GETS BETTER.

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